

**Introduced by Senator Galgiani**

February 12, 2014

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An act to add Section 722 to the Military and Veterans Code, relating to veterans.

**LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST**

SB 989, as introduced, Galgiani. Veteran services: state agencies and departments.

Under existing law, the Department of Veterans Affairs has specified powers and duties relating to veterans.

This bill would state the intent of the Legislature that the Department of Veterans Affairs enter into memoranda of understanding or interagency agreements with other state agencies and departments, as specified, to ascertain the veteran status of all persons receiving services, benefits, or assistance from those state agencies and departments, as provided. This bill authorize that the Employment Development Department and the Department of Motor Vehicles to, in consultation with the Department of Veterans Affairs, make available in their field offices brochures, forms, and posters in order to inform veterans of benefits and services. This bill also would require the Employment Development Department and the Department of Motor Vehicles to collect and send any voluntarily completed forms to the Department of Veterans Affairs on at least a quarterly basis, and to add a link to their Internet Web sites that will direct parties to the Department of Veterans Affairs Internet Web site.

Vote: majority. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: yes.  
State-mandated local program: no.

*The people of the State of California do enact as follows:*

1     SECTION 1. Section 722 is added to the Military and Veterans  
2 Code, to read:

3     722. (a) The Legislature finds and declares all of the following:

4     (1) The United States Department of Veterans Affairs spent  
5 \$7.1 billion in California in federal fiscal year 2008, \$3.1 billion  
6 of which was for compensation and pension payments to veterans.  
7 These compensation and pension payments are directly paid to  
8 veterans and generate a significant contribution to California's  
9 economy.

10    (2) Unfortunately, only approximately 11 percent of veterans  
11 who are eligible in California participate in these programs.  
12 California ranks 38th nationally in terms of participation rates. On  
13 a per capita basis, Texas and Florida collect 44 percent and 31  
14 percent more respectively in disability benefits than California.  
15 This difference is primarily due to Texas and Florida having more  
16 veterans' services representatives available to assist veterans in  
17 pursuing benefit claims.

18    (3) It is estimated that if California could increase the  
19 participation rate to the national average of slightly over 12 percent,  
20 over \$330 million more could be returned to the state and local  
21 economy and paid to our resident veterans who need that money  
22 to support themselves and their families.

23    (4) County veteran service officers and veterans service  
24 organizations have assumed the primary responsibility to assist  
25 veterans in accessing these federal benefits, but the funding for  
26 this valuable service is scarce. Consequently, the California  
27 Department of Veterans Affairs and other state agencies and  
28 departments, as well as local government agencies, that come into  
29 regular contact with veterans and National Guard members  
30 returning from deployment must do a better job informing resident  
31 veterans and their dependents of their eligibility for these benefits  
32 so that veterans and their dependents can enroll and begin the  
33 application process sooner.

34    (b) It is the intent of the Legislature that the department enter  
35 into memoranda of understanding or interagency agreements with  
36 other state agencies or departments, as selected by the department,  
37 to ascertain the veteran status of all persons receiving services,  
38 benefits, or assistance from those state agencies and departments.

1 (c) The Employment Development Department and the  
2 Department of Motor Vehicles, in consultation with the department,  
3 may make available in their field offices brochures, forms, and  
4 posters in order to inform veterans of available benefits and  
5 services. The Employment Development Department and the  
6 Department of Motor Vehicles shall collect and send voluntarily  
7 completed forms to the department on at least a quarterly basis  
8 and add a link to their Internet Web sites that directs parties to the  
9 department's Internet Web site.

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